might transfer its decree to some one else. A flood, a drought, or some other natural disaster might be interpreted as a sign of Heaven's displeasure. Or persistent tyranny and oppression might be regarded as an offense against the sacred trust. Thus revolt could seek to justify itself: a rebel who succeeded in supplanting the reigning monarch and placing himself on the throne might be regarded, if he had not employed too obviously unethical methods, as having in turn received the divine commission. It is doubtful whether in practice any family had ever acquired the throne solely because of its "virtue"—as Confucian theory required it to do. Once on the throne, however, it professed adherence to Confucianism to maintain its power. Within a given dynasty the rulers came from the same family. Under the Ch'ing, the succession was determined according to the special rules of the Manchus. With the exception of the last two Emperors, where the preceding monarch bad left no male issue, it was in direct descent in the male line. In only one instance, that of the Emperor Tung Chih, who was an only son, did the throne come to the eldest. Until tie Emperor Kuang Hsu each of the Ch'ing had been designated by his predecessor. Kuang Hsu and Hsiian Tung had, as we have seen, been the choice of the Empress Dowager—although made through a council of the notables of the imperial family and the realm.

The Emperor had many designations, some of them official, some popular. Among them were *Huang Ti* (a title adopted, it will be recalled, by the famous First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty), *Huang Shang*[9] *Tien Tzu* (Son of Heaven), and *Wan Sui Yeh* (Lord of Ten Thousand Years). The personal name of the

reigning monarch was never to be mentioned. On his death, the Emperor received a temple name, by which he is usually designated in histories. Tljere was also a *nien hao,* literally "year designation," usually called "reign name" or "reign title," by which dates were reckoned. The custom of employing a *nien hao* dated from early in the Han. Until the Ming the *nien hao* might be changed, occasionally several times, during the reign of a monarch. Under the Ming, with one exception, and after the Manchus came into power, the same *nien hao* was employed throughout a reign. In Western histories, then, the Emperors of the Ming and Ch'ing are almost invariably known by their *nien*